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## TRADE UNION IDEALS—DISCUSSION

SIMEON B. CHASE: As an exhibition of idealism the interesting paper just read is certainly very attractive, and I have nothing to say against it ; but as the speaker well said, ideals are not always lived up to by trade unions or by any other organization.

As a manufacturer I have had a good deal of dealings with trade unions. That I am a friend of trade unions can be easily established if you will visit the community from which I come ; I have always tried to be in accord with them, but I realize that in practical, every day affairs trade unions make mistakes. I also realize that in practical life the manufacturers make some mistakes—a good many mistakes on both sides. On both sides there is an inherent element of self-interest, of selfishness if we put it stronger, which is not easily eliminated and which leads to excess.

It is of course desirable that the people represented in trade unions shall obtain from the current product in the way of wages all that it is possible for them to squeeze out of the manufacturer, but it must be borne in mind that this amount that can be squeezed out is limited. It is proper to advocate and to try to bring about a shorter working day, but it must be remembered that the shorter working day also has its limitations.

The farmer of fifty years ago, when almost every one was a farmer, could but little more than feed himself and his family. To-day, with the improved methods, improved machinery, and more applied intelligence, the farmer can feed hundreds on the labor of one man. He can work fewer hours because he is enabled in these hours to produce enough for his own wants and

to exchange with others for comforts and luxuries. The farmer to-day gets much more leisure than the farmer then got—and yet farmers do not belong to trade unions.

In 1812 power weaving was introduced into the town from which I come. By working from seventy-two to eighty-four hours per week, the weaver at that time could produce about two hundred yards of a certain kind of cloth then made, receiving as wages less than two dollars per week. This is a matter of record on the books of corporations now in existence. At the present time a weaver working sixty hours per week can produce four thousand yards of the same fabric, and will receive from five to six times the amount of money that was then received. At that time a weaver's weekly wage would buy from five to seven yards of his own product; to-day a weaver's weekly wage will buy from three to four hundred yards of his own product. What has brought about this marvelous change? I do not think that my friend will claim that it is all due to trade unions. Brains have been at work in inventing and applying new machinery, which, in turn, has helped along the trade unions' cause of increased wages and shortened hours.

And right here is where I bring in my chief criticism of trade unionism as it applies to our industry, as I have come in contact with it. So far as my knowledge goes, every introduction of new methods and of new machinery and every application of the brains of the managers has met with the stubborn opposition of trade unions, and we are meeting it to-day in the industry I represent. This is the crying evil, so far as I understand it. The community will see that order is kept; but the community will not interfere between the laborer and the capitalist in the application of new methods and of new ma-

chinery to modern industry. If we are going to have short hours and maintain the standard of living and have as much wealth as we now have, it must be by the application of the same principles we have used in the past. This restriction in the use of modern machinery and appliances is therefore the most crying evil, so far as I have had to do with trade unions. Although it has been disclaimed here to-day, I know it is so, as I can prove to you if you will come to Fall River.

We need between the employer and the employee the thoughtful judgment of the public at large. We are sinners on both sides ; we do the things that we ought not to do, and leave undone the things we ought to do. I believe, however, that there is spirit enough in us to work out these problems, but we may never reach the ideal. I do not know that it would be well to reach the ideal set before us. What would we do if we did not have something ahead of us, something to hope for, something to struggle for ?

JESSE E. POPE : I feel very much in sympathy with the attitude of both Mr. McNeill and Mr. Foster. It is certainly true that if progress means anything it means a better living for the masses of humanity. Other things being equal, a shorter workday ordinarily means a less product ; and it seems to me that the question depends on our willingness to give up product and take leisure. I think that there is no doubt but that a better progress would be made, a more ideal condition would exist, if we were willing in some cases to take leisure and give up product. This is one of the points that I have always felt trade unionists did not recognize. Laborers feel that somewhere in the world there is a fund of which they are deprived, something

which, without increasing the output or increasing new wealth over old wealth in a given time, might give them more to eat, better homes, greater chance of travel. Now it seems to me that it behooves the people who believe this to show that there is such a product existing. I do not believe that it can be shown.

It also seems to me that the reason for the attitude of the manufacturer and business man against the trade unions is only on that delicate question of wages. People who are not engaged in business, who have not been obliged to get out at least such value as they put in, are unable fully to sympathize with the business man in this position. The other day I met some trade unionists from Cleveland who had come to New York to talk over with the trade unions there the conditions in the clothing industry. At the conference between the leaders of New York and the leaders from Cleveland one man said: "We have strong union conditions in Cleveland, but we have come here to ask how we are going to maintain those union conditions when our employers show us a coat that they have just received from New York which can there be made for \$2.69, but which, with the union conditions and cost of labor we have in Cleveland, they maintain they cannot make for less than \$2.80. They go on to say that if we maintain our union conditions in Cleveland, the manufacturer who is selling his coats in Omaha will buy those goods ready made up in New York." It seems to me that this is a very vital and difficult point to get around.

HUGO BILGRAM: I maintain that although trade unions assume a number of functions which are legitimate and beneficial, in what they consider their principal function they are a failure. It is generally

admitted that the remuneration of labor is lower than it should be. Producers are in some way compelled to share their products with those who have not assisted in production. Wages are low because the producers are deprived of a portion of the value they have produced. Now one of the chief functions claimed for trade unions is to raise wages by restoring to the workman a portion or all of that of which he is in some way deprived. But in this respect unions do not accomplish their object.

Labor unions aim to raise wages by coercive measures—by strikes or threats of strikes. But it is well known that whenever the cost of producing a thing has been increased by artificial means, the increased burden will, by virtue of competition, fall not upon the employer or dealer but upon the consumer. In other words, an increase in the cost of production resulting from strikes or threats of strikes will react upon the price of the products. While this may not be clearly manifest in every specific case, it is notwithstanding true in the aggregate. If, for illustration, trade unions could effect a doubling of wages, the prices of all products would in consequence rise to double their former rates, and the purchasing power of the nominally increased wages would be the same as it was before. Hence all efforts to raise wages by coercive measures must result in failure.

THOMAS N. CARVER: Some questions have been discussed here in which I am not personally interested, but which I assume to be pertinent to the question. I do not suppose that it is necessary to argue that laborers are justified in trying to get as high wages as they can, or that they are justified in organizing for that purpose.

That ought to be taken for granted. I shall certainly not insult the intelligence of a body of this kind by arguing that question. What I am interested in is the way in which the contest shall be carried on. Are the methods by which the trade unions are now trying to accomplish their purposes justifiable? Are we really interested in any other phase of the question? Granting that laborers are justified in organizing for the purpose of getting higher wages, are we to approve all possible methods of getting them? Even in the barbarous contest of football there are rules of the game, and a man may be disqualified for violating them. In the struggles of class against class society has one principal function to perform, that of enforcing the rules of the game. We are in a struggle and are fighting for our footing. Society lays down certain rules of the game, and if we violate these rules we are disqualified. That is the chief function, as I understand it, of organized society; and as members of society our chief interest in the question of trade unionism is limited to the narrow question, Are their methods justifiable?

The fact is, of course, that the conditions of labor are exceedingly bad, and the probabilities are that they will continue to be so, especially in the lower grades of labor. The only salvation for the laboring people, so far as I can see, is to avoid as they would a plague trades in which they are liable to be brought into competition with machinery. They must take it upon themselves to urge their children up into higher grades of labor wherever that is possible. But while the lower grades of labor are being forced upward, society should see to it that at the same time every opportunity is given to those who can rise to do so. For those who cannot I do not see that there is a very pleasing pros-

pect ahead. This gloomy prospect is, perhaps, a sufficient reason for judging their actions leniently.

MR. SWIFT: The last speaker as well as nearly all the others seem to think that for the larger number of the American people there is no chance. Let us examine, however, the course of to-day's discussion, particularly the discussion of a further chance for the workman of the future. This discussion assumes that industrial conditions are to remain practically as they are, and that trade unions are to go on hammering things as they now do, getting a little here and a little there.

Two great tendencies existing in society have been overlooked throughout. One of them is the rapid advance of consolidation on the part of capital, a tendency the result of which I think we can readily predict. This tendency has been going on for years, and will result in a complete consolidation of all industries. The other tendency is the movement to complete the organization of labor so that labor will form a complete, all-absorbing trade union with certain exceptions, the exception of possibly a large number of the unemployed. With capital solidly organized and labor solidly organized, the question will be this: Shall the standards which have been the prevailing standards, the hereditary standards, the standards of earlier times prevail? The struggle will be a contest to determine whether these standards are correct, and you will have the battle of the giants. That is the labor question, and all these other things being discussed are simply side issues.

DELMER E. HAWKINS: If trade unionism, as has been declared in substance here to-day by representatives of organized labor, means that organized labor has



undertaken itself not only to determine what is good and what is not good for all labor, but also to force, by means other than persuasion and moral influence, the non-union laborer to accept its views and to become union—if trade unionism, as has been said, means tyranny over non-union labor wherever and to whatever degree organized labor thinks tyranny justifiable from its own point of view, then the questions of unionism that now confront the United States and that will continue to confront the United States until they are settled and settled right are three: (1) Is it necessary that American liberty be abridged or extinguished in order that American wage labor, organized or unorganized, may progressively, rightfully, and naturally improve its conditions? (2) If it is necessary, how far and to what extent is it necessary? (3) If not necessary, how is organized labor to be brought to see that it is not necessary and be compelled to obey the laws that guarantee liberty?

These will be the questions for political economists, statesmen, practical politicians, employers, and employees, for they answer the one question here involved that is fundamental to all other questions in the matter and to all civilization and progress, the question of individual human liberty.

C. S. WALKER: The first president of this association has given us a definition of competition: the unrestrained operation of individual self-interest, each man acting for himself in exchange to get the most he can and give the least he must. For years the employers of England especially laid down this law for the settlement of all questions. The laborer had his labor to sell; the manufacturer had his commodity to sell. This

was the great law of the game, and the employers combined to enforce it to the bitter end. They said to their hundreds of workmen, "Let each man, acting for himself alone and by himself alone, sell his own labor the best he can." Now laboring men have learned the lesson which the English capitalist taught; they have organized and they act upon this law of the game, aiming to get the most they can and to give the least they must.

This law of competition brings destruction to the weaker party. Only the stronger party favors the law. If the parties are equally matched, the result is mutual destruction.

When seventy millions of the working people of the United States form one tremendous labor trust, fighting face to face with organized capital, there will be a revision of the law of competition, and the institution of this one: The efficient operation of a wise self-interest, designed always to promote the general welfare, while at the same time it secures the best interests of all parties to the exchange. Make this law of the general welfare the rule of the game, let the labor trust and the capital trust have a merger and form one big trust, and then there will be no more war between capital and labor. But there is one other party to come in, and that is the consumer. It is possible for capital and labor combined to wage war against the consumer in particular instances, but not generally, for in general the laborers and the capitalists are themselves the consumers of the wealth they create. Consumers are nevertheless parties to be considered. Let them join with capitalists and labor and form one big trust, then the question will be settled thoroughly.

A. W. FLUX: There are some things which I am stimulated to say by what has come up in the course of debate. The first is, I have yet to learn that there is generally any such considerable difference between the supply price and the demand price for labor as to enable the condition of labor to improve substantially on the basis of what has been suggested.

I should like also to make a reference to something Professor Carver has said. What are to be the rules of the game under which social life is to proceed? One particular rule was referred to in the course of this morning's discussion. What is to be the position of society in regard to one of the aims which certain trade unions place before themselves, viz., that they shall control the supply of labor in the particular trade they represent by setting up a somewhat arbitrary standard for admission to the trade? If we examine how that rule is going to work, I think we shall perhaps doubt the wisdom of too free an assertion of complete control on those lines by the rest of society. If each industry in turn should set up a like standard, what would we do with those excluded? I think the trade union authorities should consider very carefully what road they are running on in connection with various rules of the game.

THEODORE MARBURG: It is pleasant to note that excepting in the case of one speaker who I believe is not an employer of labor there has been sounded no hostile note against trade unions as such in the whole discussion to-day. The question is no longer one of form or organization, but one of conduct. The practices of the unions under discussion to-day should be considered from the standpoint of social justice and from the standpoint of their effect on the industrial product.

To further the cause of justice is one of the highest purposes of the modern state, and we fail in our duty when we countenance such practices as we witnessed in the coal region last summer, where there existed a condition of violence and persecution extending even to little children in the schools which was simply intolerable, and the repetition of which ought to be made impossible. As to the effect of trade union practices on the industrial product, limiting output not only limits the product, and therefore limits social wealth, but also is a stupid practice for the laborer himself, because, as we all know, his wages ultimately depend on what he produces. The situation is by no means so gloomy as it has been pictured. Organization, far from being feared, is to be welcomed; and the solution of the problem will probably come in this way: when employers as well as employees are thoroughly organized, the trade agreement, which solves many burning questions, will become possible. It deals directly with the questions of hours, wages, and limitation of output, and under it organizations become strong enough to suffer the presence of the non-union man.

MR. GRIGG: I wish that the public generally would recognize more fully than they do the existence of economic law, or of forces which certainly might be called economic law, in the establishment of prevailing rates of wages, not that I believe that this working of the economic law is sufficient to bring about conditions which we desire to have brought about, but that there is such a thing and that it should be more fully recognized is all I contend for. The cheap laborer needs as much, his family is as large, he is as good a man perhaps, but the conditions of supply and demand, the marginal pro-

ductivity of that class of labor, is a very different thing. This economic force is certainly in existence and must be recognized.

We must all recognize the most beneficent influence of labor unions when they are working along the lines of economic forces. We recognize that these economic forces do not work very exactly, that they do not establish a very exact rate of wage in any particular case, and we must recognize that laborers may through combination of special circumstances enhance the more natural rate of wages. We continually see the most beneficent work of labor unions in counteracting these forces and in working along these economic forces in bringing about a better condition. We must recognize their most beneficent work in bettering sanitary conditions and in many lines of that sort, and so long as the labor unions are working in this way they deserve the support of people who are working for the improvement of social conditions. It is quite possible, though, for a labor union under given conditions to advance wages beyond what would be a natural rate. In order to maintain this advanced position they must establish some sort of monopoly. I do not say that they have no right to establish as high a rate as they can, but as soon as they do this we must consider them as working not for the advancement of the whole class but for themselves.

HENRY W. FARNAM: The chief interest of the discussion which we have had this morning lies in what it indicates with regard to tendencies. Trade unions are nothing new, and they certainly will be much older before we are through with them. It is unwise, therefore, to assume that what is laid down now as their ideal is necessarily going to be their ideal a quarter of a century

hence. It has interested me very much so see how far practices advocated by the present leaders differ from those of a quarter of a century ago. In the ideals, too, as laid down this afternoon we may see a good deal of progress.

Not long ago the policy of deliberately restricting the output to make work was commonly advocated, and yet the spokesman of the unions here has distinctly disavowed it. That represents a decided advance. But we are not yet informed how far the trade union movement is going to assist in creating a fund out of which higher wages may be met. In the future I hope to see an advance along that line. I hope to see the trade union itself a real productive force, not merely aiming to get a larger share of the loaf, but itself assisting in making the loaf larger.

ISAAC HOURWICH : It seems to me that the gist of the discussion is the non-unionist. From my personal observation I do not see how a union agreement can be made otherwise than by insisting that all men who are employed in a shop shall belong to the union, otherwise the agreement is not worth the paper it is written on. You must take into consideration that when an agreement is made by a manufacturer with a labor union it is never done with a great deal of willingness. Both parties are trying to take advantage of each other, and certainly if there is any way to evade the terms of the agreement, each party will quickly avail itself of that opportunity. Suppose an agreement is made with a manufacturer that he shall pay a certain rate of wages. That agreement will bind the parties. Should the manufacturer have the privilege of engaging non-union men, having at the same time the privilege, as he always

has, of discharging men, what is there to prevent the manufacturer from gradually laying off all the union men under the pretense that there is no work for them, and substituting non-union men with whom they have no agreement? In that way the whole agreement can be made inoperative, and for this reason any lawyer who will advise a labor union will certainly insist upon the provision being inserted in the agreement that none but union members shall be employed.

ERNEST F. DU BRUL: Mr. Pfahler is certainly right when he says that the secrecy and coercion of trade unions are two things by which they shall be judged. "By their fruits ye shall know them." As to the so-called "peaceable persuasion," I want to impress as strongly as I can on the minds of this assembly that there is no such thing as peaceable persuasion. I have been through the picket line myself, dressed as a workingman, and I know the intimidation a man must suffer; it is something which workingmen could never resist. I was threatened with everything. My photograph was taken to be hung up in headquarters. I was to be blacklisted from one end of the country to the other, all because I chose, or seemingly chose, to exercise my free American right to go to work on such terms as were satisfactory to me.

It has been asked, Where are the great mass of non-union men? They are in the unions. The statement made about the Chicago shoe manufacturer by Professor George I think shows a typical instance. The great mass of members of the unions are there, not because they want to be, but because they must or think they must be there. When times change, when conditions

are such that these men find that they do not have to be in the unions, they drop out. I can give proof of that wherever the employers have become organized and disciplined. The fear of blacklisting by the union keeps more men there than does love of the union's principles and methods.

I can appreciate how the unions feel about the non-union men, but I have never seen the time when I felt we could coerce any employer into joining our employers' union, because I believe that as American citizens we are both barred from doing certain things. There is one distinction, however, between our union and theirs, and that is that we can stand up before any assembly and say that there is not one act that our organization has ever performed that will not bear the light of day. Our constitution and by-laws provide that we shall be subject to the constitution and laws of the United States and of the Dominion of Canada, into which we extend. I have yet to see a union constitution and by-laws providing any such thing. I have yet to see a union expel a man because he has been convicted of crime. Nearly every union constitution with which I am familiar provides that the president and executive board, or some other officials, shall be the judges, not only of the laws and constitution of the union, but of the *usages*—and those usages are not down in black and white; they do not dare put them there.

It has been said that the officers of unions do not stand for coercion and violence, that they do not approve of the restriction of output. Perhaps they do not, perhaps in secret a great many of them do. There is no telling; the unions are secret. It is a fact, however, that one of the fruits of unionism is the restriction of an establishment and of the machinery used therein. Denials can be made



in any way whatsoever, but here are the facts. I have placed a number of documents in the hands of Professor Commons in his investigation of the restriction of output. 'The machinists' union will strike against the premium system every time; they want nothing but day work. The minimum rate for the incompetent, wherever established, becomes in effect the maximum for the good man, and it cannot be expected to be otherwise.

It has been said that the union and the non-union men cannot mix, and I believe it is true, because the union will have it so wherever it can. Most employers would rather not discriminate against union men, but they are often compelled for self-preservation to shut the union man out of the shop because he insists on interfering with non-union men. Then the union raises the cry of blacklisting. Such blacklisting, if that is a proper name, has two sides. It is a compulsory blacklist. In such cases the union blacklists itself, and then raises a howl against the employer when its own bite hurts.

In speaking of the press, I want to say that this myth about the press favoring the employers has been exploded long ago by those who have been in strikes. Do you mean to tell me that to-day in the coal strike hearings all the things that are coming out there are being printed—brought out on both sides? From personal experience I cannot believe it. During strikes I have asked newspapers to put in a statement as to what the employers were standing for and fighting for, but they would not print it as we wanted it. When we asked them to print it at advertising rates they said that they did not want that kind of advertising.

As Mr. Pfahler well said, there have been no explanations of convictions for assault where unions are

implicated by the juries, nor have we any explanations as to why the fines are paid by the unions in criminal cases. One man, to-day an international president, then president of a local union, during a strike got up in court and swore that the struck firm was never even mentioned in the union. Thirty other men perjured themselves the same way. When we subpoenaed the books, the minutes were full of references, resolutions, committees, bills, all relating to that firm and signed by the president. One union man was pinned down by the court and compelled to answer as to whether his union oath or his duty as an American citizen was paramount, and he replied, "The union oath." The secret, oath-bound organization was superior to anything else. Judge them by their fruits. We will take the anti-injunction howl, and we will take the anti-militia howl. The Federation of Labor stands pledged for the anti-injunction bill. Why? Is an injunction in any way to injure or hinder any man who wants to keep within the law? Are union pickets for the purpose so cynically claimed by the president of the Allied Metal Mechanics Union? Are the pickets put around the plant to protect the plant from employers wishing to destroy their own property in order to bring odium on the unions? Tell that to the marines. The militia has not been shooting down peaceful citizens, and the injunction has not and never need be used against men who want to keep strictly within the law.

The strike position assumed by the union is this: "We have a proprietary interest in that job; when we leave it we must be allowed to go somewhere else to work, but we will not allow any one else to come here and take this work." Wherever the employer is strongly enough organized to put that same logic on them and

say, "Very well, if that is your job you shall have no other," then we get the blacklist howl again. When the employers are disorganized and have a divided interest, the union assumes that position and do all they can to maintain it; but when the employers are organized and put the union's own logic to work, they are called blacklists, deserving of the most horrible punishments for interfering with the union's blacklist on the employer and on non-union men.

The public in this labor union question must drop sentimentality and get at the facts. I have a clipping recently taken from a labor paper saying that the union wants the wage question stripped of everything, bathtubs and all, except the mere exchange of dollars for labor, and wants that exchange on the best terms possible. If it were only that it would not be hard to arrive at some arrangement, but there are other things. The union control of shop, the denial of the right to exercise American freedom, the limitation of production,—these are things that our organization and many other organizations of employers stand pledged to oppose. We think and believe that the American people, without un-American distinctions or discriminations because of economic creeds or of racial, religious, or political differences, will fairly decide which organization, of employers or of employees, has shown itself to be the more worthy of consideration and has shown the greatest regard for law and for the rights of all persons.

FRANK K. FOSTER: Under the limitations of my topic, I did not feel at liberty to extend the bounds of my paper to the degree suggested by those who have criticised its scope.

The professor from Harvard has asserted that we have passed that stage where a discussion of right of labor to organize is necessary. I fear that this is not entirely true. Workingmen have made very great sacrifices for many years in order to establish the right to organize, and are even yet obliged to do so. Although we have 1500 trade unions in Massachusetts, it was not long ago that in many localities for an employee to be active in the formation of a union was, if the fact became known, equivalent to his inviting his own discharge. From the attitude of the coal mine owners of Pennsylvania it does not appear that the union of miners in this state was recognized until a potent outside force was brought to bear upon the employers.

The critics here to-day have begged the question of the alleged infringement by the trade unions of the personal liberty of the individual. The non-unionists are to be congratulated that such strenuous champions of their privileges have arisen to secure for them a consideration which they have never shown themselves especially solicitous to secure. But it should be noted that these same champions have not been in evidence in protesting against the long existing ills under which labor has suffered. They have been silent while the tragedies of the sweat shop and mines have been enacted. Why, then, this sudden fear lest liberty shall be infringed by the efforts of workingmen to better their condition?

Our government, the government of a Christian nation, "benevolently assimilates" some millions of little brown people on the other side of the globe—for their good, we are told. The trade union attempts the assimilation for their own good of those who are the agents in blocking greater freedom for labor. Some

gentlemen have lamented that unions persist in getting more wages despite economic law. If the upward pressure on the wage rate exercised by trade unions does not meet with the approval of some political economists, so much the worse for the political economists.

During my twenty-seven years' membership in a trade union I have sometimes doubted whether it is possible to arrive at a common focus of vision with those out of direct touch with the labor world as to these problems under discussion. The plane of vision accounts for much of the diversity of opinion here expressed. It has been said by one speaker that the thing to do was to discuss the rules of the industrial game. This may be so, but you can hardly expect those who are in the hurly-burly of the industrial conflict to regard with complacency those existing rules which allow the heaviest and strongest players to pile themselves on top of the wage-earner.

I know not where history reveals the fact of the possessors of advantage and of opportunity in the race of life having voluntarily given up their advantage. Some form of coercion has always been requisite to force them to do so. Under free institutions the laborer has been given the legal right to exercise certain kinds of coercion hitherto denied him. Free speech, labor organizations, the ballot, all represent this lately acquired force, and it may be conservatively asserted that the wage-earner proposes to use them all to accomplish the realization of his ideals.

In the last analysis the entire social problem is a question of the relationship of individuals. The spokesman for the Metal Trades Association has truly said that respect for each others' power is necessary in order that

men reach that point where they are willing to arbitrate with and conciliate each other. This is true of the great nations of the world; it is also true of the opposing forces in the industrial order. Trade unions are militant organizations, but they are ready to hold out the olive branch when the disposition to receive it exists on the other side.